



What is the Florida Virtual School?

The Florida Virtual School (FLVS) is a public online school providing students with several virtual education options.¹ FLVS offers more than 100 courses in core subjects, world languages, electives, honors, and Advanced Placement.²

FLVS offers individual course enrollments to all Florida students in grades 6-12, including public school, private school, and home education students.³ In addition, the FLVS has partnered with Connections Academy to provide a full-time virtual education program to students in grades K-12.⁴ Florida Virtual School Full Time (FLVS FT) is open to any public school student in grades K-12 through a school district virtual instruction program⁵ if the student meets certain eligibility criteria and the student's resident school district contracts with FLVS for the provision of a virtual instruction program. FLVS FT is also open to any Florida non-public student in grades 6-12.⁶ There are separate statutory requirements relating to student eligibility, assessment and accountability, and funding for each of these options.⁷ This fact sheet generally refers to the statutory requirements relating to the FLVS, and not school district virtual instruction programs.

FLVS is governed by a board of trustees appointed by the governor,⁸ and its performance is monitored by the Commissioner of Education and reported to the State Board of Education and Legislature.⁹ FLVS is fully accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and AdvancEd.¹⁰

¹ See Florida Virtual School, *Grades K-12 Options with FLVS*, <http://www.flvs.net/parents/Pages/K-12Options.aspx> (last visited May 26, 2010).

² Florida Virtual School, *Quick Facts*, <http://www.flvs.net/areas/aboutus/Pages/QuickFactsaboutFLVS.aspx> (last visited May 26, 2010).

³ Florida Virtual School, *supra* note 1.

⁴ Florida Virtual School Full Time, *Florida Virtual School Full Time*, <http://www.flvsft.com/> (last visited May 26, 2010).

⁵ See s. 1002.45, F.S.; see also School District Virtual Instruction Programs Fact Sheet.

⁶ Florida Virtual School Full Time, *supra* note 4.

⁷ Individual course enrollments and the FLVS FT program for non-public school students operate under s. 1002.37, F.S., relating to the Florida Virtual School. The FLVS FT program for public school students operates under s. 1002.45, F.S., relating to school district virtual instruction programs. See also School District Virtual Instruction Programs Fact Sheet.

⁸ Section 1002.37(2), F.S.

⁹ Section 1002.37(1)(a), F.S.

¹⁰ Florida Virtual School, *Accreditation*, <http://www.flvs.net/areas/aboutus/Pages/accreditation.aspx> (last visited May 26, 2010). In 2009, AdvancEd acquired the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation. See <http://www.citaschools.org/> and <http://www.advanc-ed.org/> (last visited May 26, 2010).

FLVS began as two independent programs in Alachua and Orange Counties. The two counties partnered to establish the FLVS as a grant-based pilot project in the 1996-97 academic year.¹¹ In 2000, the Legislature removed the program's pilot status and statutorily codified the school.¹²

The number of course completions at FLVS has steadily grown. The following table shows the number of half-credit completions from academic years 2001-02 through 2008-09:¹³

Academic Year	Course Completions
2001-02	10,050
2002-03	12,761
2003-04	24,160
2004-05	36,679
2005-06	56,130
2006-07	84,043
2007-08	116,035
2008-09	154,125

How are the courses and delivery system designed?

All FLVS courses are delivered over the Internet. To help assure student success with virtual learning, the FLVS provides a variety of web-based, technology-based, and traditional resources. Teachers are available by phone, e-mail, instant messaging, and discussion forums.¹⁴ Students must have access to a computer¹⁵ and the Internet.¹⁶

Who is eligible to participate in the program?

FLVS courses are available tuition-free to all public, private, and home education students residing in Florida.¹⁷ Students from outside of Florida may enroll in fee-based courses through the FLVS Global School.¹⁸

Enrollment priority is given to students who need expanded access to courses in order to meet their educational goals, such as home education students, students in inner-city and rural high schools who do not have access to advanced courses, and students seeking accelerated access to

¹¹ Florida Virtual School, *supra* note 10.

¹² Chapter 2000-224, L.O.F., *initially codified as s. 228.082, F.S., redesignated in 2002 as s. 1002.37, F.S.*

¹³ Florida Virtual School, *supra* note 2.

¹⁴ Florida Department of Education, *Florida Public Virtual Schools: FLVS FAQs*, <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/virtual-schools/faqs.asp> (last visited May 26, 2010).

¹⁵ Florida Virtual School, *Frequently Asked Questions: FLVS Course Questions*, <http://www.flvs.net/areas/flvscourses/Pages/FAQs/CourseFAQs.aspx> (last visited May 26, 2010).

¹⁶ Florida Virtual School, *Hardware/Software Requirements*, <http://www.flvs.net/areas/flvscourses/Pages/HardwareRequirements.aspx> (last visited May 26, 2010).

¹⁷ Section 1002.37(1)(b), F.S.

¹⁸ Florida Virtual School, *FLVS Global School*, <http://www.flvs.net/areas/elearning/usworld/Pages/GlobalSchool.aspx> (last visited May 26, 2010).

a high school diploma.¹⁹ School districts may not limit student access to courses offered through the FLVS.²⁰

How do students earn credit through Florida Virtual School courses?

High school students earn credit toward graduation for successful completion of high-school level FLVS courses. Middle school students do not earn “credits,” but they progress from grade to grade by completing the courses required for middle school promotion.²¹

Florida law places no limits on the number of credits or course completions that a student may earn through FLVS.²² For transfer purposes, credit for courses completed through FLVS must be treated the same as courses listed in the Course Code Directory or offered by regionally accredited Florida public schools.²³

Although students earn credit through FLVS courses, FLVS does not award high school or general equivalency diplomas. In the case of a public or private school student, the credit may be transferred to the school in which the student is enrolled. In the case of a home education student, the credit may be transferred to an “umbrella school” or become part of the student’s portfolio.²⁴

What are the credentials and availability of teachers?

FLVS requires all of its more than 1,100 teachers to have a valid Florida teaching certificate and be certified specifically in the subject they teach.²⁵ All teachers must undergo a background screening.²⁶ FLVS does not require teachers to be state residents, but approximately 96 percent of the school’s teachers reside in the state. Of the teachers who reside outside of the state, nearly 95 percent resided in Florida when they were initially hired.²⁷

Teachers are available for at least 12 hours each day by email, instant messenger, and telephone. Teachers do monthly progress reports and are required to make at least one monthly telephone contact with students and parents.²⁸

¹⁹ Section 1002.37(1)(b), F.S.

²⁰ Section 1002.37(3)(c), F.S.

²¹ See s. 1001.42(23), F.S.; Florida Department of Education, *Memorandum: Florida Virtual School as a School Choice Option*, at 3 (Jan. 8, 2009), available at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-5250/dps-2009-007.pdf>.

²² See s. 1001.42(23), F.S.

²³ Florida Department of Education, *supra* note 21, at 4.

²⁴ Florida Virtual School, *supra* note 10.

²⁵ Florida Department of Education, *supra* note 21, at 1.

²⁶ Section 1012.56(2)(d), F.S.

²⁷ Testimony from President and Chief Executive Officer, Florida Virtual School, to the PreK-12 Appropriations Committee, Florida House of Representatives (Feb. 12, 2009).

²⁸ Florida Virtual School, *About FLVS Courses: Course Overview*, <http://www.flvs.net/areas/flvscourses/Pages/CourseOverview.aspx> (last visited May 26, 2010).

How do school districts participate in the program?

FLVS is available to students in all 67 Florida school districts.²⁹ At the beginning of each school year, district school boards must notify parents of high school students of the opportunity and benefits of acceleration mechanisms, including FLVS.³⁰ School districts must provide students with access to FLVS courses during or after the normal school day and through summer school enrollment.³¹

Additionally, FLVS may enter into franchise agreements with Florida district school boards to provide FLVS courses in grades 6-12 at the district level. The FLVS Board of Trustees establishes the criteria defining the elements of an approved franchise, the terms and conditions governing franchise agreements, and the performance and accountability measures for a school district franchise. The board also reports the performance of each school district franchise to the commissioner.³² School districts operating an approved FLVS franchise may count full-time equivalent (FTE) students for funding purposes in the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP).³³ FLVS currently has franchise agreements with 19 school districts.³⁴

How is the Florida Virtual School funded?

Initially, the program was funded by a \$200,000 Break-the-Mold grant awarded by the DOE in 1996.³⁵ For FY 1997-98 to 2002-03, the FLVS was funded by specific legislative appropriations. The following table shows funding amounts for those fiscal years:³⁶

FY	Amount
1997-98	\$1.3 million
1998-99	\$4.36 million
1999-00	\$3.8 million
2000-01	\$6.17 million
2001-02	\$6.17 million
2002-03	\$6.9 million

In 2003, the Legislature transitioned FLVS funding from a specific legislative appropriation basis to the FEFP.³⁷ In the FEFP, funding is based on “credit successfully completed.” Funding

²⁹ See s. 1001.42(23), F.S.

³⁰ Section 1003.02(1)(i), F.S.

³¹ Section 1001.42(23), F.S.

³² Section 1002.37(2)(i), F.S. Commissioner-approved franchises of the FLVS are subject to the requirements of s. 1002.37, F.S., relating to the Florida Virtual School, unless the franchise is established as part of a school district virtual instruction program. See s. 1002.45(1)(c)1., F.S. See also School District Virtual Instruction Programs Fact Sheet.

³³ Section 1002.37(4), F.S.

³⁴ Florida Department of Education, *Florida Public Virtual Schools: District Franchises*, <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/virtual-schools/district-franchises.asp> (last visited May 26, 2010).

³⁵ Staff of House Comm. on Education Innovation, Bill Analysis for CS/HB 2063 (2000).

³⁶ Specific Appropriation 108A, s. 2, ch. 97-152, L.O.F.; specific appropriation 116A, s. 2, ch. 98-422, L.O.F.; specific appropriation 107, s. 2, ch. 99-226, L.O.F.; specific appropriation 87, s. 2, ch. 2000-166, L.O.F.; specific appropriation 125A, s. 2, ch. 2001-253, L.O.F.; specific appropriation 110, s. 2, ch. 2002-394, L.O.F.

³⁷ See s. 19, ch. 03-391, L.O.F.

is only received if the course is completed and passed. Credits that a student completes in excess of the minimum required for high school graduation do not receive funding.³⁸

Six credits equal one FTE student. A student who completes less than six credits is a fraction of a FTE student and half-credit completions are included in determining a FTE student.³⁹

Historical funding amounts for the FLVS in the FEFP are below:

FY	Number of Unweighted FTE	Amount/FTE	Total Funds (includes Categorical Funds)
2003-04 ⁴⁰	1,764.23	\$4,859.02	\$8,572,428
2004-05 ⁴¹	2,791.72	\$5,191.43	\$14,493,007
2005-06 ⁴²	4,684.43	\$5,307.03	\$24,860,407
2006-07 ⁴³	6,865.90	\$6,300.27	\$43,257,056
2007-08 ⁴⁴	9,686.52	\$6,467.92	\$62,651,654
2008-09 ⁴⁵	12,907.92	\$6,296.75	\$81,277,949
2009-10 ⁴⁶	17,964.29	\$5,623.94	\$101,030,100

In 2006, the Legislature revised the FEFP to increase FLVS FTE by a factor of .114 to provide funding for costs associated with students who enroll in, but do not complete, a course.⁴⁷ In 2009 this factor was restricted to only public school students.

In addition to FEFP funding, the 2004 Legislature provided \$800,000 to FLVS to support activities associated with development and implementation of a grade six through eight

³⁸ Section 1002.37(3)(a), F.S.

³⁹ Sections 1002.37(3)(a) and 1011.61(1)(c)1.b.(V), F.S.

⁴⁰ Florida Department of Education - Office of Funding and Financial Reporting, *Florida Education Finance Program 2003-04 Final Calculation* (Dec. 9, 2004), available at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-2660/05-14a.pdf>.

⁴¹ Florida Department of Education - Office of Funding and Financial Reporting, *Florida Education Finance Program 2004-05 Final Calculation* (Dec. 8, 2005), available at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Version-3597/200405FinalFEFPCalc.pdf>.

⁴² Florida Department of Education - Office of Funding and Financial Reporting, *Florida Education Finance Program 2005-06 Final Calculation* (Nov. 7, 2006), available at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-4098/coefo07-10-1.pdf>.

⁴³ Florida Department of Education - Office of Funding and Financial Reporting, *Florida Education Finance Program 2006-07 Final Calculation* (Nov. 9, 2007), available at <http://www.fldoe.org/fefp/pdf/0607finalcalcparta.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Florida Department of Education - Office of Funding and Financial Reporting, *Florida Education Finance Program 2007-08 Final Calculation* (Dec. 12, 2008), available at <http://www.fldoe.org/fefp/pdf/07-08FEFP-FinalCalc-1.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Florida Department of Education - Office of Funding and Financial Reporting, *Florida Education Finance Program 2008-09 Final Calculation* (Dec. 4, 2009), available at <http://www.fldoe.org/fefp/pdf/0809finalcalc-1.pdf>.

⁴⁶ Florida Department of Education - Office of Funding and Financial Reporting, *Florida Education Finance Program 2009-10 Fourth Calculation* (April 12, 2010), available at <http://www.fldoe.org/fefp/pdf/09-10-4th.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Section 6, ch. 2006-27, L.O.F.; s. 1011.62(1)(q), F.S.

curriculum and \$1,373 in District Cost Differential (DCD) Transition Supplement funds.⁴⁸ The 2005, 2006, and 2007 Legislatures each provided \$2,948 in DCD Transition Supplement funds.⁴⁹

How is the Florida Virtual School governed?

FLVS is governed by a Board of Trustees comprised of seven members appointed by the Governor to four-year staggered terms. The board is authorized to adopt rules, policies, and procedures; enter into agreements with distance learning providers; and acquire, enjoy, use, and dispose of patents, trademarks, copyrights, licenses, rights and interests.⁵⁰

The board is responsible for generating revenue to administer FLVS operations.⁵¹ It may generate supplemental revenue from a variety of sources, including alumni associations, foundations, parent-teacher associations, and booster associations.⁵² Additionally, FLVS may receive other funds from grants and donations.⁵³ Although the ownership of patents, trademarks, and copyrights vests with the state, the board has the full right of use and the right to retain any revenues derived from their use to support the school's research and development in order to improve courses and services for students.⁵⁴

Where can I get additional information?

The Florida Virtual School

2145 Metrocenter Blvd., Suite 200
Orlando, FL 32835
(407) 317-3587
<http://www.flvs.net>

Florida Department of Education

Division of Public Schools
(850) 245-0509
<http://www.fldoe.org/Schools/virtual-schools/>

Florida House of Representatives

Education Committee
(850) 488-7451
<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/>

⁴⁸ Specific Appropriation 10B, s. 1, ch. 2004-268, L.O.F.

⁴⁹ Specific Appropriation 79A, s. 1, ch. 2005-70, L.O.F.; specific appropriation 98, s. 1, ch. 2006-25, L.O.F.; specific appropriation 91A, s. 1, ch. 2007-72, L.O.F.

⁵⁰ Section 1002.37(2), F.S.

⁵¹ *Id.*

⁵² Section 1002.37(2)(e), F.S.

⁵³ Section 1002.37(2)(h), F.S.

⁵⁴ Section 1002.37(2)(c), F.S.